

"A SOUR DOUGH'S STORY,"

Or "How a Gold Run Claim Was Lost and Won."

A Complete Novelette in One Chapter
—Sour Dough Puts Chee Chahko Next.

Our old friends Mr. Sour Dough and Mr. Chee Chahko met one day last week for the first time in months. Friend Sour had just returned from a trip outside, while Chee, being a new arrival, had occupied the summer in observation which, as will be seen, had not resulted in putting him "on the inside." In conformity with modern Klondike development, Sour wore the stiffest of high linen collars, which had chafed a red ring round his neck about the height of the lower lobe of the ear. Chee was attired in bicycle knickerbockers and negligee shirt.

"Holy smoke!" exclaimed Chee, "but I'm glad to see you back. How did you find things outside?"

"Didn't find 'em at all," remarked Sour sullenly. "You see, everything found me. Had on a nugget chain and a nugget pin and seemed like as everybody was waiting at the depot for me."

Chee laughed. "Things seemed kind of cheap after being up here so long, didn't they?"

"Cheap be d—d!" said Sour emphatically. "Can treat the crowd on a half a dollar and a fellow thinks he's going to have a sheol of a time on a few ounces, and he wakes up one morning and counts his change, and finds he'll have to be a blooming assisted emigrant if he gets back to Dawson at all. Why they've got one of those dummed nickel-in-the-slot machines on each end of every bar, and things are so cheap a fellow doesn't like to save his nickels so puts them in the machine. Then he gets interested and buys a few dollars' worth of nickels. Nickels don't seem to amount to much, and yet he'd better buy wine in Dawson than play the machine." And Sour glowered ominously and led the way into Tom Chisholm's saloon.

Chee took lemonade and Sour took a big horn of—he didn't care what. A repetition at Chee's expense and the pair found themselves again on the street.

"Where will we go to have a private talk?" asked Chee, who had an idea that Sour could post him on a certain important matter.

"A fellow's more alone in a crowd than in a private room in Dawson," was the sage reply. "Let's go to the theater. Arizona Charley has got a play on in which a bridge breaks down and the horse drops 14 feet into a tank of water, leaving the rider hanging in the air."

At the Grand the pair took another drink—lemonade and whisky—and proceeded up to the row of boxes, where they found themselves as much alone as if locked up in a bank vault.

"Say, I'm in trouble!" commenced Chee.

"Ah, ha!" broke in Sour. "You've been and got a hold of a claim somewhere and can't get it recorded. Is that it?"

"You're off this time old man. I bought one already recorded."

"No gold in it, and got a payment to make," suggested the old timer.

"Wrong again. The fact is it's a dandy, and now a fellow comes in and says it's his. For the life of me, I can't see how the government can escape liability for giving me a clear abstract if the protestant has any claim on the ground."

"Liability nothing. It would bust the government to make good all that people have lost through its employees," and Sour touched the button in disgust. "Has the other fellow got any valid claim?"

"Come to look into the matter," continued Chee slowly and thoughtfully, "I rather think he has. Fact is I'm a thousand out and I can't afford it."

"Why don't you do as was done with No. 37 Gold Run last winter?"

"What was that?"

"Well—I mean—don't you think you could make out a good case if you could keep the other fellow out of court? Let me tell you about 37, and you'll see what I mean," and both drew their milking stools close together for a good talk, after having satisfied themselves that the play of the Arizona Scout had not yet arrived at the bridge scene. Sour drew the box curtains to and-but-

toned the door, and in low, careful tones commenced:

"You see, it was this way. Leo Schifferle was cute, and when Edgar decided the creek was no good and went outside, Leo moves onto his claim ready to relocate as soon as the time came. The creek was becoming better known every day, and so to keep other people off—ha! ha!—Leo pretends he is on the ground a-representing for Edgar. Ha! ha!" and Sour dug his forefingers into Chee's ribs to point the joke.

"What good would that do?" asked Chee lugubriously.

"Why, darn it, can't you see he fooled 'em?" and at thought of the horde of stakers coming to spy out the land, and being led to believe it was never to lapse, Sour rolled from side to side on his stool in silent mirth, only a hearty chuckle escaping now and then to testify to his enjoyment.

"Well, you see," he continued, after recovering his breath, "Leo recorded the claim and counted himself worth a few thousand ounces, when up comes an ex-official who said the claim was his and was very positive. Leo said he knew better, so a day was set before the gold commissioner for a hearing. Well, the day come around and Leo had all his witnesses and made out a spanking good case and then they all goes to lunch." Sour stopped to laugh in his usual inaudible way and was interrupted by:

"I don't see anything funny about that."

"O, you don't?" and Sour straightened up for a minute. "Don't you see the other side hadn't been heard yet?"

"Nothing funny about that."

"No, but there was when they met after lunch," and Sour took three minutes to laugh quietly to himself. "You see, when Leo got back they wouldn't let him in to hear the other side of the question, and—"

"Why, you don't mean to say he was kept outside?"

"Locked out," laconically.

"Did he try the side entrance?"

"Yes, and he pounded on the door—ha, ha—and went to the clerk at the front door, and—" Here the comicality of one party to an important suit being locked out of court struck Sour so severely that he nearly exploded. Nothing but a pressure on the button connecting with the bar saved him.

"Why, that's not funny a bit," said Chee, indignantly. "I call it a d—d fraud."

"O, but you don't see the point yet," laughed Sour. "Leo got in after awhile."

"O, he did, did he?"

"Yes, and the interested ones were just going out."

"O, they were," scornfully interjected Chee.

"Yes, and one of 'em says, 'You lost your case, young fellow,' and that was all the satisfaction he got— But look here we're missing the show," and in an instant both heads were through the divided curtain and both pair of eyes fastened on the stage.

Sure enough there was an inclined plane leading to a high bridge. On the stage was a melee of murderous Indians, helpless maidens and rescuing cowboys.

Up the inclined plane rushed Charley, the rescuer, on his fiery mustang, and— But the horse had been there before and instead of standing over the trap sped on like a deer. At the appointed place Charley grasped the stringer on which he was to dangle while the horse went into the tank. Down dropped the bridge—and so did Charley, for he missed his hold and went head first into the tank below. The accidental change of program brought down the house and in the uproar attending the curtain call for Charley, all in his dragged finery, we lost track of our two friends.

He Never Goes There Any More.

"Young man," shouted the irate father, "if I ever catch you here again I'll use my cane."

"As you suffer with the gout," responded the young man, "you'll probably use your cane whether you catch me or not."

Then the cane was used right there.—Chicago Record.

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